Reducing the time taken for issuing of Passports

3337. SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the average of the number of days taken to issue a passport at the Regional Passport Office at Bombay;

(b) what is the average of the number of days taken to issue a passport at the passport offices in other cities of India; and

(c) what steps are being taken to reduce the waiting period at Bombay and other cities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (PROF. K. K. TEWARI): (a) 45 to 60 days.

(b) Information is being collected and would be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) The delay in the issue of passports is mainly due to a sharp increase in the number of applications received during 1988. Arrangement for overtime payment and additional staff on contingency basis have been made. A fresh staff inspection unit study has also been initiated to increase staff in various Passport Offices commensurate with the increased workload. A number of cases are pending with Police/other authorities. Periodical reminders are being sent to police authorities to expedite their reports. Steps have been taken to ensure expeditious police verification without sacrificing security requirement.

Agreements with France

3338. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 103 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 22nd February, 1989 and state what action has been taken or is being taken regarding the agreements for closer economic and technological co-operation, signed between France and India during the recent visit of the President of France to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): During the recent visit of the President of France to India an Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Bio-technology and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council of Medical Research and French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Institute National de la Sante at de la Recherche Medicale) were signed. In pursuance of the Agreement for Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Bio-technology a human Viral Vaccines Project will be established in Gurgaon, Haryana in the joint sector. The joint venture and technical cooperation agreements between the three promoting partners namely Department of Bio-technology, Government of India, the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited (IPCL) and Institute Meriuex of France have been signed for the establishment of a R&D cum Production Unit for the manufacture of moasles, rabies (Vere), inactivated polio and quadruple (DPTP) vaccines. The project has been sanctioned by the Government of India to be established in Gurgaon District of Haryana.

No development has taken place so far under the MOU signed between ICMR and the French Institute for Health and Medical Sciences.

Sanctuaries to Refugees from Tibet

3339. SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's assessment of the present situation in Tibet; and